

TEST PRESSING

ALBUM REVIEW: ANNA HOMLER / STEVE MOSHIER - BREADWOMAN & OTHER TALES by Dr Rob

"Ee Che"'s washroom rhythm could be mistaken for a relative of Roberto De Simone's "Corro Delle Lavandie", and perhaps it is, but what sounds like a song of labour handed down from generation to generation is actually an invention, received in epiphany as Anna Holmer drove through Topanga Canyon in 1982:

"I began spontaneously singing and chanting in a language I'd never heard before".

"Breadwoman", with a mask of dough that transformed the "linguistic alchemist" into a genial but toothless granny, became Homler's conduit and tool for performance.

Homler's "speaking in tongues" bears strong resemblance to the Norwegian Sami of Mari Boine, and her minimal electronic backing of melodic drones and bass drops, bubbles and bullfrogs in an analogue swamp, provided by Liquid Skin Ensemble's Steve Moshier eerily pre-dates Boine's collaboration with The Mungolian Jet Set (what happened to those guys?) and their picnic in the Adriatic Sheerwoods. Homler's tones may be familiar to some since she was also responsible for the Café Del Mar Classic "Return Journey", under the guise of Voices Of Kwahn, a track popular with Jose Padilla, Phil Mison and Andrew Weatherall.

It's hard to believe that these recordings were made in the early 1980s, a testament not just to Moshier's work but also to RVNG Intl.'s re-mastering (see also the brilliant job the label / gallery did on Craig Leon and Kerry Leimer's Savant). The music could be brand new.

Language is something that interests me, out of necessity. When I relocated I lost mine, now rendered effectively deaf, dumb and illiterate. This bugbear that I try to pretend is not a bugbear, is something I touched on when reviewing the Rex Illusivii release on Offen last year. Forced to become a student /infant again the written word is just a pattern and speech a collection of noises. When you understand nothing I guess you search for clues and guides, links and commonalities and I can hear them in the traditional dialects of the Serbian Illusivii, Sainkho's Tuvan overtones, Boine, Vietnamese boat women, Japan's Akue Asazaki, and bizarrely Homler's creation of spells and incantations, legends and folk tales from a land of imagination only, where word and rhythm are one.

On "Oo Nu Dah" beatless spirals are accompanied by fragments of Homler's song, sampled and played back against itself in a kind of round, a methodology shared with Claire Hammill, a methodology recently updated by Dozzy Donato & Anna Caragnano (on their outstanding "Sintetizzatrice" LP). "Giyah" summons a scene akin to the three witches warmed at a cauldron in the Scottish play, winds blowing hard as prophecies foretold unfold. Histories and futures only stories on the same page. A company of wolves baying in the background. "Yesh` Te" is a lullaby with the subterranean ambience of the second side of Bowie's "Low". The lengthy "Sirens" has Holmer's vocals reduced to high-pitched squeaks like dolphin clicks and chatter against a John Carpenter soundtrack throb. A narrative from the deep, strangely meditative for its uncomfortable nature. The even longer "Celestial Ash" throws a "hello" in to a cave, a glacial melody, a symphony, created from the resulting delay. Breadwoman's voice stretched and twisted into blasts of reedy horns, as a whispering of spirits hush around stalactites and stalagmites.

Anna Holmer & Steve Moshier's "Breadwoman & Other Tales" is released by RVNG Intl. on February 19th. You can also catch "Breadwoman" on a short European tour.